

AGING IN ATLANTA

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JOIN US AS WE EXPLORE WHAT IT MEANS TO BE HAPPY AND HEALTHY BEYOND 55



Adrienne D. Jones has listenership across the nation with her senior-focused radio show.

BABY BOOM BUSINESSES

Expertise on aging issues is on the air

GERO-Juice tunes listeners in to all kinds of key info.

By Elizabeth Crumbly
For the AJC

Adrienne D. Jones never set out to entertain and inform listenership across the nation. But a childhood influenced by senior family members ultimately set her on a path: Informing a large swath of the aging space through her GERO-Juice Radio show, which she produces in metro Atlanta. Jones’ gerontology degree has positioned her to understand the topics and issues that interest seniors, but it was those early and deep connections that first gave her a passion for this demographic.

‘A grandma’s girl’
“I always have to give hats off and kudos to my grandmother and her sister because I’m a grandma’s girl. That’s where this whole love for seniors comes from, No. 1,” she told the AJC.

She remembers accompanying her grandmother to her work cleaning homes and helping her carry out a role as primary caregiver to Jones’ grandfather, who had multiple sclerosis. The commitment she saw her grandmother and great-aunt dedicate to others inspired her.

“Everything that I learned from them – from cooking to showing love and kindness to people – it all got stirred up from being around them all day, every day,” she said.

Later, in her adult life, Jones worked in the aging space with a few county-level agencies.

“I was connecting with seniors, and at the same time, it was eye-opening because I learned that not all seniors were being served properly,” she said. “They needed more help than what the county was able to offer them.”

That revelation led Jones to scout new resources for the population she was serving. In doing so, she formed new relationships and knowledge. She used that basis when she launched GERO-Juice in 2022.

A one-woman show
Jones releases the show weekly on Thursdays and informs her audience on everything from how to choose Medicare Advantage plans to locating caregiver resources and protect-

Jones continued on S2



A large portion the American population, about 25%, is known as the “sandwich generation”: Adults in their 40s and 50s who are taking care of elderly parents while still raising their own kids at home. ADOBESTOCK IMAGES

By Patricia Neligan Barley
For the AJC

A quarter of the U.S. population has earned a second title as a generation that doesn’t involve birth year, according to Pew Research. The “sandwich generation” signifies a growing number of adults who care for elderly parents while still maintaining a household and/or a job, often while raising their children and possibly grandkids.

This demographic includes primarily middle-aged adults 40-59. It refers to those pinched between two generations – looking after a parent or two while planning for retirement or helping a child pay for college. Though equally important, these relationships offer an extra challenge, especially if you do not live in the same state or city as your parents.

Everyone’s situation is different, and finances can play a significant role in what steps you decide to take for your specific situation. Knowing that social services could be available to your aging loved ones can help alleviate some worries for your family system.

Many cities offer free social services for senior adults, and looking at the programs your local library offers is a great place to start.

“I just want to help them bridge the gap of technol-

Care continued on S2

LIFESTYLE

What is the ‘sandwich generation’?

Resources and compassionate tips to help adults who care for older parents, while still raising young children.

LEISURE TIME

Keeping family-friendly travel close to home

There’s a lot to pick from within a short drive from Atlanta.

By Lesly Gregory
For the AJC

A lot goes into planning a family trip that appeals to multiple generations. For those who don’t want to spend a long time traveling, but want the fun to start as soon as possible, consider sticking close to home.

There are a few resorts no more than an hour from Atlanta that provide all-inclusive, family fun every generation can appreciate.

“It’s important to find a destination that’s affordable

and can accommodate all the family, offering something for everyone,” Missy Burgess, marketing and public relations director at Lanier Islands told The Atlanta Journal-Constitution.

If the lakefront is what you’re looking for in a nearby destination, Lanier Islands might be right for your family. There aren’t many beaches you can go to in Georgia, so having one that’s just under an hour from Atlanta is convenient.

“It’s a different world, close to home,” Burgess said.

According to Burgess, families love that once they get over the bridge and park the car they rarely have to

drive again. Resort carts and trolleys can take you anywhere you need to go, whether it’s to the water park, golf course or Game Changer, a massive gaming complex. There are also plenty of water-based activities and hiking trails.

“We have something for everybody and options the whole family can do together,” Burgess said.

If it’s a quieter retreat that’s calling your name, Serenbe, a wellness community, is only about 30 minutes outside of Atlanta.

“Serenbe gives families the ability to allow kids to spend quality time in

Travel continued on S2



Swimming? Check. Boating? Check? Beach bars, water rides for kids and beautiful sunsets for everyone to enjoy? Check. All of this and more can be found at Lanier Islands. CONTRIBUTED BY LANIER ISLANDS



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AGING IN ATLANTA

Jones

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ing identities. Her guests have included subject matter experts, community leaders, and seniors who have talked about how they're serving others in their older adulthood.

Jones has had to learn about the nuts and bolts of radio as she's developed the show.

"I'm the producer. I find the music. I find the content. I find the guests if they haven't found me, and I make everything relevant," she said. "I'm a one-woman show."

She's had to answer certain questions for herself: Did she want music? Why or why not? Could she hold her audience's attention without it? When she did decide on music, she had to make sure it brought across a certain feel from the background tracks to the transitional tunes.

"There's a lot of different nuances that I've learned," she said. "If you listen to my shows, you hear my bed music that I play and my bumper music, and they were specific to have that chill, calm, still positive, upbeat vibe where the audience can still pull from me."

And she's had to figure out a general structure for her episodes.

"You have to know who you're going to speak to: That's No. 1," she said. "You have to know the message you're going to deliver, and you have to be consistent in that message. My messages

always start off with ... positive affirmations. I end with an encouraging word that's Bible-based. The flow has to be the same."

Delving in

In an age of podcasts, radio might not be the most obvious platform, but it has served Jones efficiently. In her two years on air, she's built up a listener base that spans the country from New York to Ohio to Los Angeles. Like podcasts, radio shows depend largely on sponsorship for revenue. Unlike podcasts, however, they still use towers to broadcast live messages. But listeners also can catch Jones' shows online after they've aired. Each one lasts about an hour.

Last year, Jones tackled arthritis, breast cancer, auto repair fraud and caregiving costs ... among many other issues seniors regularly face.

She gets a lot of questions about the name of the show. The inspiration is simple: She used the root of her academic focus – gerontology, and she tacked on the modern slang term for authority.

"I don't want to call it 'Age Talk.' That's boring," she recalled. "I'm like, 'OK: Gero, what can I say? I can say GERO-Juice ... People don't know that Gero – G-E-R-O – means aging. Juice is like the 411 of what's happening. That's where you're going to get all the hottest topics on aging."

Jones is currently delving into new topics. Listeners can visit sconline.com/gero-juice to hear her live or to catch up on previous episodes.

Care

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ogy," said Xavier Simon, a library associate at the Peachtree Branch of the Fulton County Library System who started Tech Tuesdays about a year ago. "Things are moving so quickly and I enjoy giving a helping hand, and assisting them in catching them up to speed."

Simon found that older patrons were coming in and asking for help to set up an email account or had questions about their iPhones. He saw a need to designate a certain time when he could offer this assistance.

"Technology is changing so quickly, and it is hard to understand all of it, especially when this age group didn't grow up with computers like my generation did," Simon said. "They always leave with more information than they came with and are very grateful for the assistance, and I enjoy helping them,"

The library plans to extend the hours of this service, as more senior adults have been coming in to seek help.

You may not need home care health services yet, but just a helping hand or a backup can make a world of difference.

In 2018, Paige Wilson's mom, while in her early 70s, broke her hip. Wilson lived only five minutes away, but she was a single mom raising a teenager and had a demanding job in finance.

"It was hard, all of the little things," she said. "I couldn't drop everything to go and help her reprogram her television remote." Wilson noticed her mom asking for less and less and saw her mom's world shrinking because she didn't want to be a burden.

That's when Wilson decided to start Naborforce, an Atlanta-based company that offers services to people with aging parents. It offers flexible and on-demand help with fully vetted staff who do not require long-term contracts. This can include run-

ning errands, cooking meals or just companionship.

Loneliness is a common ailment of our older generation. "These connections are what makes the business work," Wilson said. "Everyone is seeking that human connection, which is at the business's core. Our parents had help raising us, having other family or hired sitters, so it is no different."

No matter your family situation or the level of support, you must take care of yourself before you can physically and emotionally care for others. Is this something only you can do, or have you conditioned your family to rely on you for tasks others could take over?

Prioritize the time you need to spend with your parents, going to important doctor's appointments to ensure they have what they need and are taking the medication prescribed. This older generation may not advocate for themselves in medical settings, but their younger supports may have a better grasp. Younger people tend to advocate better for themselves, unlike past generations that were not as comfortable taking agency over their medical care and options.

Most seniors must have the medications they need and take them as directed. Getting automatic refills delivered to the house, which most insurance plans now offer and prefer, can be a huge time saver. You can purchase monthly or weekly pill sorters so they worry about that task day to day.

AARP offers tips on how to assist your aging parents from a medical standpoint and in several other ways, including finances and making sure your loved one isn't susceptible to scams and their finances are not vulnerable.

Setting boundaries can be extremely helpful, such as communicating upfront before you become resentful while caring for parents and managing your home

HOW TO ALLEVIATE STRESS AND SET SOME BOUNDARIES

- Seek senior services in the area your parent lives. Many cities, including Atlanta, offer services that help people in the sandwich generation hire help for errands, chores, doctor appointments and even assisting with technology.
- Find a social group your parent may be interested in to reduce loneliness. Several community centers throughout the United States offer events, such as card clubs and exercise classes, that are free to senior adults. A simple Google search in your area can help you find what you are looking for, or look into the National Council on Aging and see what health benefits and services could be available.
- Chair yoga, Medicare information sessions, and other practical and sometimes fun events for seniors are offered at various Atlanta libraries in Fulton County. Many libraries also provide free book clubs and movie clubs for senior-specific groups.
- Silver Sneakers, an exercise program included in many Medicare plans, has several locations around metro Atlanta.
- Look into the services in your parent's community to help with anything from transportation to financial help. Fulton County offers various transportation services for older adults. Look at the website to see what services could benefit you and your loved ones.
- Meals on Wheels may not be an option depending on the situation and finances, but it can be a saving grace for some. Even if you only use these services temporarily, this is a great way to supplement food for an older adult if they cannot cook or shop for themselves.

life. Talk about finances, schedules, and how much time and financial support you can offer.

If you talk to your relative about their expectations versus what you can provide them, there is less chance of resentment and frustration as you move into this next phase of your lives.

Remember that "no" is a complete sentence. You don't need to feel guilty or explain yourself to anyone, not your parents or other loved ones. How you spend your time and money is up to you.

Nedra Glover Tawwab is a therapist and author who talks about setting healthy boundaries with family members, including your children or a sibling you may be working with, to help you through this phase of your life.

In her book, Glover Tawwab gives concrete and simple ways to help empower you to set boundaries that

will make you and those around you happier. All relationships take work, and her book "Set Boundaries. Find Peace," offers some real-time valuable solutions to a sometimes frustrating situation.

According to the Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, children and teens can gain self-confidence by pitching in around the house.

It boosts their self-esteem and helps to show they are part of the family – and it can help you out. The skills children and teens learn at home can help set them up for success in other areas, such as school and work.

Remember that changing the family dynamic can sometimes be frustrating for everyone, and there may be a learning curve. However, keeping communication open and encouraging kids to support older relatives can be rewarding for all ages.



Serenbe, only about 30 minutes outside of Atlanta, features an organic farm, shops, restaurants and an inn with year-round cultural events to enjoy. CONTRIBUTED

Travel

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nature," Garnie Nygren, COO and co-managing director at Serenbe told The Atlanta Journal-Constitution.

There is something for everyone in this compact community, which features a 25-acre organic farm in addition to shops, restaurants and an inn. There's a seasonal, weekly farmers market, a wellness spa, and the Art Farm, which features plays and performances. Year-round cultural events allow you to experience something different each time you visit.

"Serenbe offers a one-of-a-kind experience rooted in nature and wellness. Set among acres of preserved forests and meadows with miles of trails that connect homes and restaurants with arts and businesses, there is truly nothing like it," Nygren said.

Also under half an hour away is Stone Mountain Park.

"Stone Mountain Park has always been a place where everyone in the family can have a great experience," Jehan Williams, senior manager of communications and digital marketing, said.

Combining seasonal festivals and events with history, natural beauty, and fun activities for the whole family, it's good to have a lakeside resort and camp-

grounds on the property so you can stay overnight.

According to Williams, the Pumpkin Festival and Stone Mountain Christmas are the favorite events, while the most popular attractions are the Summit Skyride, Scenic Railroad and the SkyHike.

When it's time for an all-inclusive trip, close to home, with plenty of indoor activities, there's Great Wolf Lodge. The 100,000-square-foot waterpark is only part of what makes this destination so popular.

"It's like a cruise ship on land," Jason Bays, general manager for Great Wolf Lodge La Grange said.

With bowling, an arcade, a ropes course, MagiQuest live-action game and more, there's always something happening during your stay in addition to the water slides within the indoor waterpark.

"Our mission is to bring joy to families. Everything is designed to create a care-free escape for families to reconnect and spend quality time," Bays said.

Whether you take advantage of all these close-by, family-friendly options, or travel farther, it's not about the journey, but about being together.

"Family travel is important because you get to spend quality time together and make memories that you'll cherish for a lifetime," Williams said.



Stone Mountain Park is one of Georgia's most-visited attractions — and a popular spot for visitors and families to unplug. Attractions include the nightly Lasershow Spectacular in Mountainvision; SkyHike, the nation's largest family adventure course; Geyser Towers; a scenic railroad; Ride the Ducks and more. CONTRIBUTED

ACTIVE AGING

Why muscle tone matters as we age

The stronger you are, the more flexible, agile you will stay.

By Yolanda Harris

For the AJC

Eating healthy foods, creating a skin care regimen, improving sleep, and incorporating exercise are effective approaches to enhance wellness at any age. But what if there were a way to also be stronger with each passing year? Achieving muscle tone through strength training is one way to make aging more enjoyable, fend off mobility challenges, and recover from injuries quickly.

It is no secret that the older a person becomes, the less muscle they retain. However, the stronger a person is, the more flexible and agile they become.

"As hormones that support muscle mass start to dwindle as we age, it becomes more important to continue strength training and encourage lean body mass and muscle tone that will naturally be lost if we don't do anything about it," said physical therapist and certified strength and conditioning specialist, Dr. Joseph Powell.

Starting at ground zero

Strength training may sound scary, but it doesn't have to be. Going to a gym and participating in activities like cross-fit training and weightlifting will get the job done. However, there are many ways to achieve the goal at home.

"I'm a big proponent of body weight-based exercise," said Powell, who practices at Proactive Rehab Physical Therapy, Aquatic & Wellness Center in Conyers and McDonough. "Each day we do simple motions like getting out of bed, standing up

from a chair, getting in and out of a car, or using our arms to push up from sitting. So, why not do motions that simulate those movements?"

Powell recommends trying chair dips to tone the upper body. Sit in a chair, place each arm on the armrest, and push up as if to stand. Using resistance bands or free weights are easy ways to gradually begin. Resistance bands come in various colors denoting light, medium and heavy. YouTube offers videos on tai chi and yoga. Regardless of age or fitness level, it is never too late to begin.

Having a twice-weekly strength training regimen is beneficial for anyone over 50. It helps in "building up and maintaining a level of muscle strength so that you can remain physically and mentally independent," Dr. Pamela Peeke, national spokesperson for the American College of Sports Medicine's Exercise is Medicine initiative, told AARP.

Benefits of strength training

"Strength Training Past 50," a book co-written by Thomas R. Baechle and Wayne Westcott, Ph.D., notes some benefits include: increased metabolism and bone density, reduced fat, lowered blood pressure, improved cardiovascular health, and enhanced mental health.

"Over the years, I've noticed that strength training helps keep me injury-free," runner and McDonough resident Barbara Hook said. A participant in the wellness program offered by Proactive Rehab, she attests to the benefits of physical therapy.

"I noticed that my hip was just off," she said. "If I sat too long, if I walked, if I ran, if I didn't do any-



McDonough resident Barbara Hook is an avid runner. PHOTOS COURTESY OF BARBARA HOOK



"I've noticed that strength training helps keep me injury-free," Barbara Hook said. Having a twice-weekly strength training regimen is beneficial for anyone over 50.

thing, it was like a twinge in my hip."

Hook credits strength training during physical

therapy for her recovery. However, it was her primary care physician who recommended ongoing strength training to enhance overall wellness. The avid runner will be 55 in April and is preparing for a 50-mile run in June.

GET MOVING

- Tips to promote strength each day from the National Institute on Aging
- Incorporating a few simple steps can help get the ball rolling:
- Get up and move frequently
- Stretch as a daily routine
- Set realistic goals
- Keep it fun!

AGING IN ATLANTA

ASK THE EXPERT SHANNON PAWLEY

How wills and trusts work in estate planning

Advertising Content by The Estate & Asset Protection Law Firm.

As an estate planning and elder law attorney, I frequently encounter a common query among clients: Should they establish a will or a trust to safeguard assets and provide for their loved ones in the future? While both serve as vital tools in estate planning, comprehending their distinctions is crucial for making informed decisions. Let's delve into the nuances of wills and trusts.

Wills: Cornerstone of your estate planning

A will, often known as a last will and testament, is a legal document that articulates your desires regarding the distribution of your assets after your passing. It outlines instructions for your assets held in your individual name at the time of your death, addresses guardianship of minor children, and may even include provisions for funeral arrangements.

Here's a closer examination of its key aspects:

■ Post-creation requirements: There are no post-creation requirements to ensure the legal validity and effect of a will.

■ Effectiveness: A will has no legal effect until after your passing. If you relocate to a different state after drafting your will, it's crucial to have it reviewed to confirm that it still adheres to the specific requirements for validity in your new state, as these requirements can differ. Moreover, since a will only becomes legally effective upon your passing, it doesn't offer any directives for managing your affairs if you become incapacitated during your lifetime.

■ Probate process: Wills must undergo the probate process, a court-supervised procedure that validates the will and oversees the distribution of assets held in your individual name at time of death. While probate offers a structured framework for executing the will, it can be time-consuming, costly, and may necessitate separate probate processes if assets are owned in multiple states.

■ Flexibility and simplicity: Wills offer a straightforward method for asset distribution and beneficiary designation.



OUR EXPERT
Shannon Pawley is Attorney & CEO of The Estate & Asset Protection Law Firm. During her legal career, Shannon has represented the full spectrum of clients from international blue chip companies to single parents. After 10+ years serving as a Vice President for National Law Firm, Shannon welcomed the opportunity to return to her estate planning roots. At her current firm, Shannon is able to focus on her passion to help her clients age with dignity, grace, and independence throughout their lives while assisting the client to create their post-life legacy through asset preservation.

They are relatively easy to create and amend, making them suitable for individuals with uncomplicated estate planning needs.

■ Public record: Upon initiating the probate process, wills become part of the public record, allowing anyone to access details about your assets, beneficiaries, and the probate administration process. This lack of privacy may concern individuals seeking confidentiality.

Trusts: The Swiss Army knives of estate planning

In contrast to wills, trusts offer a more comprehensive and flexible approach to estate planning. A trust involves the transfer of assets to a trustee, who manages them on behalf of beneficiaries according to the terms established by the grantor (the person creating the trust). Here are some distinguishing characteristics of trusts:

■ Post-creation requirements: As a trust only governs assets titled in its name, it's necessary to transfer assets into the trust after its establishment. This transfer process may span several weeks and involve additional expenses, such as deed transfers.

■ Effectiveness: A trust can be effective

both during your lifetime (living trust) and after your death (testamentary trust). Since trusts often hold legal validity across state borders, there's typically no need for a legal validity review if you move to a different state. Certain trusts, such as revocable living trusts, can provide instructions for asset management in the event of your incapacity.

■ Probate avoidance: One of the primary benefits of trusts is their ability to bypass the probate process. Assets held within a trust can be distributed directly to beneficiaries, saving time, money, and offering greater privacy since trust documents are generally not part of the public record.

■ Control and customization: Trusts afford greater control over asset management and distribution. Grantors can specify detailed instructions, such as staggered distributions or provisions for beneficiaries with special needs, ensuring their wishes are meticulously followed.

■ Privacy protection: Unlike wills, trusts afford greater control over asset management and distribution. Grantors can specify detailed instructions, such as staggered distributions or provisions for beneficiaries with special needs, ensuring their wishes are meticulously followed.

Choosing the right option for your estate planning

In summary, while both wills and trusts are essential estate planning tools, they serve different purposes and offer distinct benefits.

Wills are crucial for outlining asset distribution after death, while trusts provide more control, privacy, and flexibility, and can help avoid probate.

Depending on individual circumstances and goals, incorporating one or both of these tools into an estate plan is advisable.

It's imperative to consult with a qualified estate planning attorney to determine the best approach for specific needs.

For further guidance tailored to your circumstances, contact our office at 404-334-9551.

Remember, your legacy is too important to leave to chance. Choose wisely, and let your estate plan reflect the values and aspirations you hold dear.

HEALTH

Hope fuels comebacks for many physical rehabilitation patients

Positive attitude, hope of reuniting with loved ones essential to recovery.

By Rachel Brown Kirkland
For the AJC

No one told Evette Oates they didn't think she was going to live.

But some thought it. "I was no longer able to walk," said Oates, a retired public servant who lived independently in northwest Atlanta before an unusually aggressive neuropathy devastated her body in 2022, leaving her bedridden. "I needed all kinds of assistance with eating, drinking ... there was really nothing I could do for myself."

Some of Oates' friends visited her in that debilitated state. She later learned they thought she was dying.

Fast forward to today, and Oates can not only feed herself, walk and perform basic self-care, she's also leading a life of fulfillment where she enjoys plants, music and visits with friends.

Physical rehabilitation, which she receives through A.G. Rhodes' long-term care home in Atlanta, played a key role in her recovery.

And she's not alone. It's no surprise that as adults age, the likelihood of needing rehab to recover from an illness or injury goes up.

According to the American Physical Therapy Association, getting quality care can have a major impact on a person's quality of life. Physical therapy – movement aimed at helping a patient build or regain function – is typically a major part of the larger rehab process, along with occupational therapy, which helps address defi-



Evette Oates helps prepare orchid centerpieces as part of a horticultural therapy session. Oates was bedridden in 2022, but the rehab she receives through A.G. Rhodes played a key role in her recovery. CONTRIBUTED

cits that affect daily living, such as being able to dress or feed oneself. Rehab also can be needed for recovery from an injury, illness or major health event, such as a stroke.

DJ Owoyomi is A.G. Rhodes' director of rehabilitation for Wesley Woods, Cobb and Atlanta, where he oversees a team of physical therapists and support staff, including those on Oates' care team. Owoyomi said a patient's motivation plays a key role in returning to health, especially among older adults. So does continuity of care and a patient-centered approach, he added.

"I have seen 90-year-old patients that have recovered from a major stroke, a 100-year-old that walked after fractures on the hip, patients that have been on hospice that recovered and were returned to normal life," he said.

Owoyomi said working in his profession for 21 years has given him a firsthand look into individuals' ability to recover from difficult situations. At A.G. Rhodes, 89% of patients return to their prior level of function following care, he said.

"Having hope is essential

to their success," he said. "If a patient is positive-minded and hopeful to return home to his or her spouse or family, they recover faster with good outcomes."

Hope of becoming more independent was key for Jo Faddis, a retired psychotherapist who received outpatient care through A.G. Rhodes after a fall left her with a broken hip followed by a three-month hospital stay where she also battled COVID-19 and pneumonia.

"It's amazing what physical therapy can do," Faddis said. "I've come from being bedridden to being up and able to get in the car by myself, go to my doctor appointments, or go out to lunch. It's been a major change from when I came out of the hospital."

Faddis said accepting her situation and committing to keep pushing were important to her success. But quality care is essential, she added, noting the staff who worked with her were skilled, positive and caring.

Rehab is often intense, but for patients like Oates and Faddis, the results can be life changing. "Trust the process," Oates said. "It's as simple as that."

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AGING IN ATLANTA

TRAVEL

Back in time: Must-visit Macon museums

City’s major impact on culture, music can be experienced.

By Karon Warren
For the AJC

Head south on I-75, and an hour and a half later you’ll find yourself in Macon. If you haven’t jumped off the highway to explore this city before, you’re missing out on some of the state’s most notable historical attractions. Macon overflows with Native American, African American, and music history and does a stellar job highlighting them all.

Visit a national historical park

Just minutes from downtown Macon, Ocmulgee Mounds National Historical Park honors the history of the Native Americans who called this area home. The Mississippian Period began around 900 CE, as evidenced by the mounds that remain in the park. To learn more about them, catch the orientation movie and exhibits at the visitors center for background on the tribes who lived and worked here. From there, head into the park where you can enter the Earth Lodge and climb to the top of the Great Temple Mound. Eight miles of trails afford further exploration throughout the park.

Looking to make history of its own, the park could become Georgia’s first national park and preserve if approved by Congress.

“The creation of the Ocmulgee Mounds National Park and Preserve this year would protect the cultural and natural resources of the region and bolster the economic viability of middle Georgia for generations to come,” said Seth C. Clark, executive director of the Ocmulgee National Park and

Preserve Initiative. “It’s hard to overstate the impact this is going to have on the region.”

Dive into African American history

In downtown Macon, the Tubman African American Museum showcases the art, history, and culture of African Americans. Stories here range from the well-known, such as Harriet Tubman and her efforts to help enslaved people reach freedom through the Underground Railroad, to the untold, such as Sarah Randolph Bailey, who brought scouting to Macon long before Girl Scouts permitted African American Girl Scout troops. The “From the Minds of African Americans” exhibit highlights the scientists, inventors, and businessmen who changed our daily lives. After all, what would you do without your ice cream scoop invented by Alfred Cralle?

Music to explore

Of course, many people are familiar with Macon’s strong musical heritage.

“I wish there were a way to pinpoint why the artists Macon has produced have been so profoundly influential – the secret could be bottled up and sold!” said Lisa Love, director of the Georgia Music Foundation in Macon. “There’s an energy here living on the sacred ground that was inhabited by the Muscogee and their ancestors, and there’s a laid-back vibe, which seems to translate musically. I believe the wellspring of natural talent has spiritually drawn from those intangibles, and been encouraged by a wealth of church music, a long history of great music educators, and smart local entrepreneurs.”

For a deeper dive into this aspect of Macon history, visitors can tour the



The burial mounds at the Ocmulgee National Historical Park, near Macon, were built by Native Americans during the Mississippian period, around 1000 CE. The park, designated a National Treasure, is part of the rich cultural resources of the Ocmulgee River corridor. COURTESY OF NATIONAL TRUST FOR HISTORIC PRESERVATION

Big House Museum, which documents the evolution of the Allman Brothers Band through exhibits and artifacts. Because band members lived in this home, visitors can see some rooms that are preserved as they were when the band lived here.

In the Museum at Capricorn Records, visitors can learn more about the record company and artists that made music in Macon through the interactive and display exhibits. You can even search for artists and listen to some of their music. The Otis Redding Museum honors the life and career of the singer who died at 26. Memorabilia and artifacts line the walls along with informational plaques that document Redding’s rise to fame.



One room of memorabilia in the Big House Allman Brothers Band Museum in Macon includes a pool table owned by Gregg Allman and Cher. MELISSA RUGGIERI FOR THE AJC

HEALTH

More older Georgians seeking mental health help

Area therapists say depression, anxiety are main afflictions.

By Mark Woolsey
For the AJC

Losing a longtime partner and cherished friends. Persistent medical problems that range from arthritis to cancer sapping strength and peace of mind. Isolation. Lack of a support system. Family induced drama. All that and more strongly correlates to the level of mental health in older adults.

Therapists say those and other factors can bring late-life adults to their waiting rooms with a variety of afflictions, but two of them dominate.

“From a mental standpoint, it’s depression and anxiety hands down,” said Kelly Morgan, a licensed clinical social worker and co-owner of Revere Counseling and Care Management in Atlanta.

Many times, she said of clients, “They’ve been living with depression, and they can and go on with their lives. And when they get to this stage in life the way they manage it no longer works.”

Practitioners said they’re seeing more and more older adults seeking not just various forms of therapy to address those issues – particularly as the past stigma surrounding mental health care fade gradually fades – but also solution-based tips and approaches for (at least) maintaining an even keel, despite dealing with grief, loss, isolation, loss of self-esteem, and, regrettably, even abuse.

Chris Dorsey, an Atlanta licensed clinical social worker who specializes in geriatric psychotherapy,

said he has a specific process aimed at combating feelings of sadness, helplessness and end-of-life fears.

“You have to create a room that feels as though you are authentic, you are nonjudgmental, you are safe,” he said. Also important is meeting patients where they are, validating their feelings and connecting them with resources.

Having helped them manage day-to-day emotions and give them hope, an action plan can take shape, which he called “a purposeful plan they can put into action when they get home.”

Therapists, life coaches, health practitioners and others say those plans can take many forms and there’s no one-size-fits-all.

A broad area that can be broken down is grouped under the general heading of “positive social interactions,” said Dr. Rachel Feit, founder of Evolve Behavioral, which focuses on health psychology.

“Being around people and socializing is important not only to our lifespan but is closely related to our mental health,” she asserted.

“That doesn’t mean you go out and join every card club that there is,” she said, but volunteering with a social service agency, spending time with grandkids and joining an activity even if you’re in a nursing home, or just calling a couple of friends every day, are all helpful.

“Continually seeking opportunities that bring you joy,” is how she put it. Dorsey’s suggestions fall along similar lines.

“Phone calls, senior centers, church organizations and online communities,” he noted can all help maintain or lift depression and anxiety.



Older adults will begin to outnumber young people in the United States in the coming decade. DREAMSTIME/TNS



A man works out in Portland, Oregon on Jan. 7. Strength training is essential for aging well. GRITCHELLE FALLESGON/THE NEW YORK TIMES

Life coach and yoga teacher Dana Oneto said simply continuing to work or resuming work has helped

her clients stay engaged. And, naturally, she believes deeply in the power of regular exercise.

“I had a 90-year-old who would come to my yoga class and would ski all winter,” she remarked.

Exercise can take many forms, but the science behind it vividly illustrates its mental health regulating benefits, therapists and aging experts say.

“Exercise and movement provide endorphins and can act as a natural antidepressant in the brain,” Feit said. “If you’re moving for 30 minutes four or five times a week, there’s evidence to show that it’s going to produce a level of serotonin in the brain that mimics somewhat the effect of an antidepressant.”

Oneto touts the stress-busting and other benefits of a regular yoga practice and said a regular practice of meditation “keeps your mind clear and your mood elevated.”

Dorsey ticked off walking, yoga, stretching, bike

and treadmill as helping to regulate mood and mental health.

He said consistency is another key, stressing good “sleep hygiene,” going to bed and getting up at the same time each day, as well as taking medications on a consistent daily schedule.

The therapists said planning a trip or a project can provide a “forward focus” and a sense of accomplishment when a project is completed.

Another piece of the depression and anxiety puzzle – and an addressing of which can aid mental health – involves sexuality, said Courtney Geter, a licensed marriage and family therapist with the Atlanta Therapeutic Group.

“With older adults it’s about a change in sexual function, the loss of a partner or a partner who’s no longer coherent,” she said.

As a result, “educating about sexuality is what I do,” she said, adding the connection between sexuality and well-being is so well-established it’s been added to Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs, an iconic psychological blueprint.

Mental health experts lament that barriers remain to effective treatment and results for older adults, including “the notion that only the incredibly crazy seek out mental health care,” as Feit put it, and difficulties finding counselors and specialists who are in network for taking Medicare and Medicaid Advantage.

Such considerations aside, mental health experts advised those seeking to boost their mental health to keep trying new activities and approaches. They said if one approach isn’t working, try something else.

AGING IN ATLANTA

LIFESTYLE

3 ways you can actively enjoy warmer days

Pickleball popular, but there are other ways to exercise.

By Lesly Gregory
For the AJC

As the weather begins to warm up, there are plenty of ways to stay in shape and shake things up by getting outdoors.

“It’s important to never have a zero-day when it comes to physical activity,” Mitchel Black, owner of STRONGSIDE, a gym with locations in Woodstock, Canton, and Roswell told The Atlanta Journal-Constitution.

Black stresses doing “anything above the minimum” can count as exercising, even outside.

“Park far away, walk up a hill, take the stairs, get out of breath for about 20 minutes each day,” Black said.

Black offers a Legends program at STRONGSIDE specifically for people 55 and older. Each class has a warm-up, strength session, and workout with a special coach trained to work with this age group. They take their workout outside when the weather permits.

If the gym isn’t your speed, an easy way to get outdoors and get the body moving safely is to go for a long walk. There are plenty of easier trails around Atlanta for those who want distance over difficulty. If you want more of a workout for your heart, try out trails that offer a little more diversity in terrain.

If you prefer exercising outdoors by playing a sport and haven’t tried pickleball yet, it might be time to look for a local league. The pop-

ularity of this sport has continued to grow.

“As a person who has always enjoyed and played a variety of sports, pickleball sparked my interest, and I have enthusiastically encouraged people to give it a try,” Mike Levin told The Atlanta Journal-Constitution.

At 74, Levin considers himself to be in the “best physical condition of my life,” and plays pickleball at least three times a week.

Among the reasons Levin gravitates toward the sport, he cites its health benefits, how easy it is to learn, the low-pressure stakes of playing, and that it’s a fun way to meet people while being active.

“I get a full-body workout that provides pleasure and rewards. It makes me feel energized, happy, and excited,” Levin said.

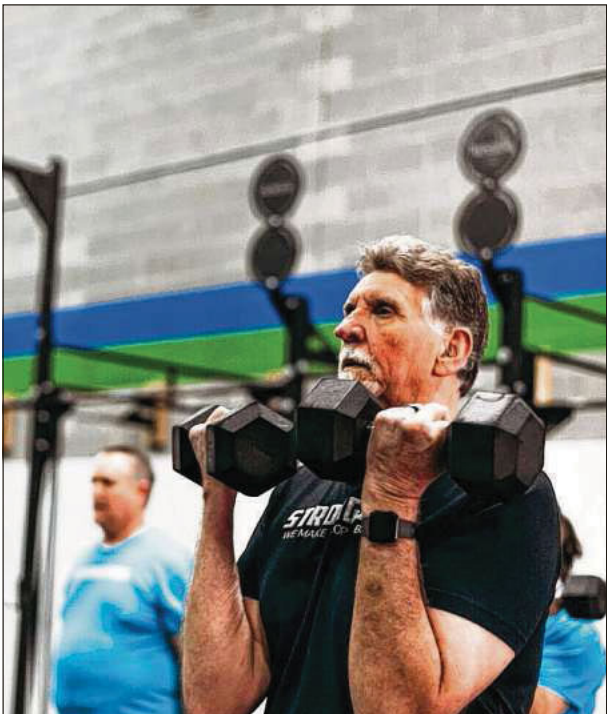
Yoga is yet another way to exercise indoors or out.

“Seniors can gain both flexibility and mobility from practicing yoga, depending on which specific practice they choose,” Alena Levine, E-RYT 500, YACEP, lead yoga trainer told The Atlanta Journal-Constitution.

Levine is an instructor at Peach Out Power Yoga in Marietta and the owner of Heartwell Retreats, which combines yoga practice with the sanctity of nature.

“Yoga is all about finding the right type of movement and setting a personal intention at the start of each practice,” Levine said.

It’s also about finding an instructor who offers positivity and shows compassion. Class choice should depend on your personal history and what daily activities you already do, says



Even if you’d rather be inside, STRONGSIDE gym offers a Legends Program specifically for people 55 and older.



STRONGSIDE gym has locations in Roswell, Woodstock and Canton and focuses on classes for older adults.

Levine. If you’re looking for a flow that focuses primarily on muscles, try a yang class. Yin classes work on muscles, too, but also bring in a focus on the connective tissues in the body.

Levin includes yoga in his workout routine in addition to pickleball because of the opportunity to take classes outdoors.

“Being outdoors helps release stress levels and helps me stay focused,” Levin said.

Look for classes held in

parks or near lakes around Atlanta for a quieter way to connect your yoga practice of mind and body with a natural setting.

Whether it’s a more active workout or something that helps you find calm while moving, you can find additional benefits to taking that exercise outside.

“Being outside gets you to connect with you,” Black said. “It gives you that mental clarity that’s a big piece to being successful in exercise.”

FUN AT 55 SPRING HAS SPRUNG

6 activities to keep you busy all March long

By Lesly Gregory | For the AJC

Although the official first day of spring isn’t until closer to the end of the month, the beginnings of the season are in the air. Whether celebrating St. Patrick’s Day or just getting out to a local festival, these six activities will help remind you winter is on its way out.

GET OUT YOUR SHAMROCK

Atlanta’s St. Patrick’s Day Parade

With a variety of Irish organizations and businesses ready to share their heritage with Atlanta, the St. Patrick’s Day Parade is a family-friendly experience that emphasizes the diversity of the city. With the mantra that “everybody is Irish” even if just for one day, you’ll see festive floats, bands, Irish dancers, and more. Arrive by 11 a.m. to get a good spot along the parade route. This event goes on rain or shine.

Noon-1:30 p.m. Saturday, March 16. Free to the public. Parade route starts at the Woodruff Arts Center, 1280 Peachtree Street NE, Atlanta, and goes along Peachtree Street in Midtown. atlantastpats.com



Even animals participate in Atlanta’s St. Patrick’s Day Parade, showing off their Irish green.

ATLANTASTPATSCOM

The Luck of the Irish

Getting into the spirit of St. Patrick’s Day a little differently, the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra celebrates the holiday through music. The Luck of the Irish lets you explore Irish fairytales through a selection of pieces ranging from classical compositions to tracks featured in movies. All with a nod to Irish culture, this family-friendly performance offers people of all ages the chance to celebrate St. Patrick’s Day together.

1:30 p.m. and 3:00 p.m. Sunday, March 17. Ticket prices vary. Atlanta Symphony Hall, 1280 Peachtree Street, NE Atlanta. 404-733-4800. aso.org/events/detail/the-luck-of-the-irish

HAVE A LITTLE WINE

North Georgia Wine Country Tour

With transportation, lunch, and tastings of up to 13 different wines, this day-long excursion into the North Georgia Mountains is full of local fun. Set against a beautiful natural backdrop, you’ll sample wine from multiple vineyards, making a final stop in Helen for some free time to eat, drink, and shop around town. Transportation is provided every step of the way to allow you to enjoy the day rather than worry about getting yourself from one stop to the next.

10:30 a.m.-7 p.m. Sunday, March 17. \$120 per ticket. Trader Vic’s, 255 Courtland Street NE, Atlanta. Pick-up and drop-off are in the same location. Meet outside. wanderwomenproject.com/event/north-georgia-wine-country-tour-from-atlanta/2024-03-17

Georgia Food and Wine Festival

Offering up tastings, cooking demonstrations, and plenty of drinks to sample, the Georgia Food and Wine Festival will keep you busy. You pick and choose what you’d like to attend, buying separate tickets for each day.

If you want to bring the whole family, Sunday Funday offers a free Kids Zone along with a VIP Oyster Roast for adults. Live music and an artisan shopping village round out the weekend.

7:30-9:30 p.m. Friday, March 22, 1-4 p.m. Saturday, March 23, noon-4 p.m. Sunday, March 24. Daily tickets and VIP Lounge access are available, prices vary. Jim R. Miller Park, 2245 Callaway Rd. SW, Marietta. georgiafoodandwinefestival.com



@GEORGIAFOODWINE INSTAGRAM

VISIT A FESTIVAL

Brookhaven Cherry Blossom Festival

Live musical performances by well-known bands accompany the many activities available at the Brookhaven Cherry Blossom Festival. In addition to the music, there are plenty of food vendors, an artist market, Kids Zone, and a classic car show. This family-friendly and pet-friendly event easily has something for everyone to enjoy.

10 a.m.-6 p.m. Saturday, March 23 and 11 a.m.-6 p.m. Sunday, March 24. Free admission. Blackburn Park, 3493 Ashford Dunwoody Rd., Brookhaven. brookhavenga.gov/festival



@BROOKCHERRYFEST INSTAGRAM

Sandy Springs Artsapalooza Spring Arts Festival

Bringing art to the streets of Sandy Springs, the Artsapalooza Festival features the work of up to 125 different artists. You’ll also find interactive art stations to get everyone’s creativity flowing. The weekend celebration includes local musicians and a children’s play area. There’s even a Sunday Easter egg hunt.

10 a.m.-5 p.m. Saturday, March 30, and 11 a.m.-5 p.m. Sunday, March 31. Free admission. 6100 Lake Forrest Drive NE, Sandy Springs. sandyspringsartsapalooza.com



Alena Levine says older adults “can gain both flexibility and mobility from practicing yoga.”

EVENTS

Now is the time to register for next Aging in Atlanta event set for March 11

Join us for conversations on topics important to older Atlantans.

By Kiersten Willis
kiersten.willis@coxinc.com

Do you want to know about aging in place? What about estate planning and asset protection? Then you should join The Atlanta-Journal Constitution for a fun and informative event on aging well in Atlanta.

The AJC is committed to facilitating conversations

on the topics important to aging in Atlanta and providing you with resources to live your best life. As we continue our ninth year producing content focused on subjects of specific interest to the 55+ community, we’re looking forward to seeing you 11 a.m. - 1:30 p.m. Monday, March 11, at Georgia International Convention Center. Kroger is our presenting sponsor.

Register now for free and you can see local experts cover all the hot topics. Doors open promptly at 10:30 a.m.

Panelists include Erin

IF YOU GO

To register, visit ajc.com/agingevents, where you can view the schedule.

The Atlanta Journal-Constitution Aging in Atlanta March event

11 a.m.-1:30 p.m.
Monday, March 11
Georgia International Convention Center:
2000 Convention Center Concourse, College Park

Webb, PharmD., health and wellness pharmacy practice coordinator for Kro-

ger Atlanta Division; and returning panelist Shannon Pawley, J.D., LL.M., attorney & CEO at the Estate & Asset Protection Law Firm. Stay tuned for other panelists who will share their insights at the event.

Topics will include healthy living, estate planning, navigating Medicare, and things to do.

We’re hosting quarterly events across metro Atlanta this year – and you don’t want to miss what we have in store. Plus, lunch will be served, and parking is free thanks to our generous sponsors.



AGING IN ATLANTA

YOU'RE INVITED TO JOIN US LIVE!

The Atlanta Journal-Constitution is committed to facilitating conversations on the topics important to aging well in Atlanta and providing you resources to live your best life!

Our upcoming event features local experts speaking on topics that matter most to you:

- ✓ Protecting your assets and estate planning
- ✓ Aging well in place
- ✓ Managing prescriptions & immunizations
- ✓ Medicare



WHEN/WHERE:

Monday, March 11 | 11:00 am – 1:30 pm

Georgia International Convention Center College Park, GA

PRESENTED BY:



SPONSORED BY:



RSVP TODAY!

Visit ajc.com/agingevents

We encourage you to submit questions on the topics above for our speakers when you register.

